

**OPENING SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE DR. OMARI ALI JUMA, THE VICE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA, AT THE FIRST ROAD
TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER CONFERENCE IN AFRICA
(AFRICA T² 2001)**

**ARUSHA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE (AICC)
ARUSHA, 23RD MAY 2001**

Honourable John P Magufuli, Minister for Works,

Head of various delegations,

Members of various Diplomatic Cops,

Honourable Daniel Ole Njoolay, Arusha Regional Commissioner,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I must express my gratitude to you, Minister for Works, for inviting me to officiate at the opening ceremony of this landmark conference. I am indeed honoured to be associated in some way with deliberations which I am sure will impact on the economic restructuring of our continent. I hope the conference will result in a mushroom of technology transfer centres in Africa with the objective of improving the continent's road transport system.

Roads are very important in the social and economical integration of the African Continent. It has long been our dream to establish direct continental-wide linkage from Cape to Cairo and Dar—Lagos. The possibility to realise this through road transport now looms large. It is thus my pleasure to welcome the delegates to this meeting. I hope those who hail from outside our country will have the opportunity to see some of the world famous attractions of Tanzania's northern tourist circuit

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this world of science and technology, there is no meaningful advancement without transfer of technology. In the past technology moved from research findings to practice via the simple diffusion of knowledge. Today, with the rapid outset of new road technology and reforms we need a much more systematic technology transfer approach.

We need to have in place a system or agency that will unshelf the technology, ideas and best practices which are currently held within individual countries world-wide and disseminate them to road providers and users. I note that to road providers and users. This calls for active interaction between researchers, sponsors and road users. I note that this is the main objective of this conference and I sincerely applaud your initiative. Since technology is dynamic, in order to

keep abreast with technological advancement, I expect there will be follow-up conferences to this one.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I must commence the organisers of the Conference for managing to attract a wide global participation. I believe I will be speaking for most of our Continent if I say that the quality of our roads leaves a lot to be desired. There is obviously a need to acquire better technology that will not only improve durability of our roads but also reduce the cost of both construction and rehabilitation. As a follow-up to this conference, I would suggest that a water-tight system that the consultancy of upgrading the road infrastructure, but has, on the contrary, been a drain on our economies by inflating original cost, prolonging the period of construction and necessitating high maintenance costs.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Tanzania, like most of Africa, has embarked on a policy of economic liberalisation, which necessitates heavy capital injection from the private sector. But in order to attract that participation, our governments are obliged to provide enabling environment for a vibrant economy. On top of pre-requisites is, of course, a sound and durable infrastructure, including an all-weather road network.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indeed, the significant of road transportation in Sub-Saharan Africa today needs no over emphasis. History shows that, after the Second World War, road transport in Sub-Saharan Africa grew rapid and now it is the dominant mode of transport. Road carry about 80% of the region's passenger and freight and provide the only form of access to most of rural communities. Between 1960s and 1970s most of Africa Countries expanded their network by building new roads, which open up more land for development. Studies show that by end of 1980s there were nearly two million kilometres of roads in Sub-Saharan Africa. The roads are some of the region's largest assets.

The importance of roads in Sub-Saharan Africa is also reflected by the fact that road spending typically absorbs 5 to 10% of Governments'recurrent budgets and 10-20% of development budgets. Furthermore, in many countries, a significant proportion of the central governments' disbursement and outstanding debt is attributed to road loans. The road sector also absorbs a great deal of grant finance.

Unfortunately, despite the substantial investments that have been made in the past in road transport infrastructure, inefficient management coupled with inadequate funding has led to deteriorated road conditions and increased transport costs in many Sub-Saharan African countries. What has now become clear is that the traditional approaches to road management and financing, which have relied on managing roads through government departments and financing through general budget allocations, have generally not worked. Moreover, the prospects for improvement under the traditional approaches appear to be virtually non-existent.

Thus, there is now urgent need for a radical change in approach, which recognises that roads are “big business” and must be managed and financed along business-like principles.

To bring sustainable solutions to the problem of road deterioration, a number of Sub-Saharan African Countries are in the process of implementing reforms towards commercial management of their roads. These reforms include involving road users in the management through road management boards, securing a reliable and stable flow of funds through road tariffs or road funds, and increasingly commercialising or privatising the execution of engineering services and road works.

In this context, the technology transfer programmes have such a significant role on the on-going reforms. Transfer in technology will sustain the reforms through shared experience and best practices in road ownership, management and financing concepts and principles.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Technology transfer is also a crucial aspect in the fight against poverty. As we all agree, road transportation has a significant role in contributing to poverty reduction in the developing countries. For most sectors of the economy, road network forms vital link between production centres and markets. In addition its multiple function of providing access to employment, social, health and education services makes road network crucial in fighting against poverty by opening up more areas and stimulating economic and social development.

It has been shown in the case of Tanzania, using results of the 1993 Human Resource Development Survey conducted by the World Bank, that there is a marked decline in incomes for households that are more than 5 kilometres away from the nearest road. The reverse is also true; the potential for higher welfare is marked for households that are closer to a road than for those that are far away.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I appreciate that this conference will deliberate on technology and best practices for improvement of roads to make more durable earth roads, which form the bulk of rural roads network. It is my expectation that the Tanzania Technology Transfer Centre and those in SADC regions will ensure that these technologies and best practices are captured, disseminated and shared with respective stakeholders. Particular reference should be made to feeder roads to ensure that production areas are accessible all round the year and thus facilitate the alleviation of poverty in rural areas as I hinted earlier.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Tanzania, we say this is the era of openness and accountability. There is no hiding the fact that corruption pervades the sector of road construction in Africa. I avail myself of this opportunity to commend the ministry for works for their efforts in combating this evil. I hope they will share their experience with you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me remind you about the effects of lack of maintenance to road networks. In addition to lost or reduced economic opportunities, poor condition of roads increases vehicle operating costs and losses resulting from road accidents. This has a spill over effect on the rest of the economy. High operating costs have to be passed on to producers and consumers in the form of high freight rates and fares. This in turn makes our agricultural and industrial goods much more expensive and uncompetitive in international markets. It also fuels inflation; increases travel time, thereby lowering efficiency and productivity. The cost of having to rebuild a prematurely deteriorated road is enormous and unaffordable to our poor developing countries.

If African countries want to achieve real economic development, road maintenance must now take precedence over investment in upgrading or new infrastructure. Our Technology Transfer Centers have a significant role to play in these changes. They should take up the challenge to disseminate appropriate road maintenance technologies to suit our environment.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to reiterate the fact that technology, and technology transfer, has a major role to play in economic growth of our countries. However, for the technology transferred to be effective it should be of preference, manageable and within purchasing power of the targeted group. The technology transfer should be equipped with programmes that will promote the participation of potential users. Failure to observe these norms, the anticipated technology transfer will never work. We therefore expect our Technology Transfer centres to guide themselves properly in disseminating the appropriate technologies in the particular environment.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I expect that during the three days of this conference, you will devote your time in all sessions and discuss in detail the presentations that will be made before coming up with specific conference recommendations. It is my sincere hope that the SSA States will take serious action on the recommendations coming out of your Conference.

With these remarks, I now have the honour to declare this conference on Road Transportation Technology Transfer in Africa (Africa T² 2001) officially opened, and I wish you every success in your deliberations.

Thank you for your kind attention.